US mulls new laws against China, Japan in currency dispute

AFP, *Washington*

US senators warned Wednesday that new laws could be adopted against China and Japan to counter moves by the Asian giants to keep the value of their currencies low, which the lawmakers said is hurting the US economy.

Matching their words with action, legislation was introduced in the Senate Wednesday requiring Washington to work with other countries to stop the Japanese government from "manipulating" the yen.

In the coming weeks, another measure could be proposed seeking tough action against China for allegedly undervaluing the yuan.

The bipartisan China bill will be "well-crafted legislation -- WTO-compliant and strong and effective -- (and) is likely to pass with a veto-proof margin during this Congress," its chief proponent, Democratic Senator Charles Schumer, told a congressional hearing on China's currency policy Wednesday.

Schumer had led an unprecedented effort in the last Republican-dominated Congress by introducing a bill to slap punitive tariffs on Chinese imports if it did not revalue its currency.

The bill surprisingly won two-thirds support in the Senate in a procedural vote. But it was held back to give Beijing time to undertake currency reforms.

"But now the possibility for legislation in the 110th Congress is real, because the number of people who will vote for strong legislation exceeds the number of people who would have voted for a tariff," Schumer said.

Senior Republican Senator Chuck Grassley charged that "China has engaged in large-scale intervention to restrict appreciation of its currency" and called for an "overhaul" of US laws pertaining to oversight of global currency exchange rates.

Some lawmakers believe that Beijing has undervalued its currency by up to 40 percent in order to boost its exports, and that this is a key reason for the snowballing bilateral US trade deficit.

Beijing ended a decade-long peg to the dollar in 2005 in favor of a managed float at that time, revaluing the currency with reference to a basket of currencies.

Since then, the yuan has appreciated against the greenback by about 6.6 percent. But lawmakers said it hardly made a dent to the US trade deficit with China, 232 billion dollars in 2006.

"Some will say that China's currency has appreciated against the dollar. But overall, on a trade-weighted basis, the value of China's currency remains largely unchanged since 2005 levels," said Democratic Senator Max Baucus, who chaired the hearing of the Senate finance committee.

Another Democratic senator, Debbie Stabenow, introduced legislation Wednesday to stop the Japanese government from participating in what she called the unfair trade practice of manipulating the yen.

The Japan Currency Manipulation Act proposes steps to "prove that the Japanese manipulate the yen," and would require Washington to work with other countries to put a stop to such practices.

PHOTO: ICMAB

The 'Second Continuing Professional Development Program-2007' of the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh (ICMAB) was held on Tuesday in Dhaka. Chairman of Securities and Exchange Commission Faruq Ahmad Siddiqi, ICMAB President Mamtaz Uddin Ahmed and Secretary Mohammed Salim, among others, were present at the programme.

UK economy grew 2.8pc in 2006

AFP, *London*

Britain's economy last year expanded faster than previously thought despite a downward revision to fourth quarter growth, official data revealed on Wednesday.

In a separate release, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) revealed that Britain's current account deficit ballooned to a record 12.7 billion pounds (18.7 billion euros, 24.9 billion dollars) in the fourth quarter of 2006, compared with 10.5 billion pounds in the third quarter.

The current account refers to the net flow of current transactions -- comprising goods, services, and interest payments -- between countries.

Sterling weakened against the dollar and euro in European foreign exchange trading after the downward revision to fourth quarter economic growth data and news of the larger-than-expected current account deficit.

The British economy grew by 2.8 percent in 2006 compared with 1.9 percent 2005, which was faster than last month's estimate of 2.7 percent, the ONS said.

Vietnam's economy growing fast

AFP, *Hanoi*

Vietnam's economy grew 7.7 percent in the first quarter compared to the same three-month period in 2006, the Government Statistics Office (GSO) said in an early estimate Wednesday.

It was the highest figure for the first quarter since 2001 and came after Vietnam's January 11 entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which is expected to boost both exports and foreign investment.

Last year, communist Vietnam's economy expanded nearly 8.2 percent, one of the world's fastest rates after China.

Industry and construction drove the first quarter growth at 9.3 percent, services expanded 7.8 percent, and agriculture, forestry and aquaculture grew 2.3 percent, the GSO said.

PHOTO: TRUST BANK

Deputy Managing Director of Trust Bank Ltd Ishtiaque Ahmed inaugurates an ATM (automated teller machine) booth in the bank's Sylhet corporate branch recently.

PHOTO: PRIME INSURANCE COMPANY

The Annual Branch Managers' Conference-2006 of Prime Insurance Company Ltd was held on Tuesday in Dhaka. Chairman of the company Qazi Saleemul Huq, directors and other senior officials were present at the conference.

CURRENCY

Following is Thursday's (March 29, 2007) forex trading statement by **Standard Chartered Bank**

Major currency exchange rates

	BC Sell	TT Buy
US dollar	69.10	68.10
Euro	93.40	89.16
Pound	137.21	132.07
Australian dollar	57.12	53.54
Japanese yen	0.60	0.58
Swiss franc	57.74	54.86
Swedish kroner	10.28	9.30
Canadian dollar	60.61	58.13
Hong Kong dollar	8.86	8.70
Singapore dollar	46.60	44.73
UAE dirham	18..97	18.40
Saudi riyal	18.57	18.02
Danish kroner	12.92	11.65
Kuwaiti dinar	235.43	233.77

Exchange rate of some currencies

	Per USD	BDT per Currency
Indian rupee	42.80	1.60
Pak rupee	60.65	1.13
Lankan rupee	108.85	0.63
Thai baht	35.01	1.96
Malaysian ringgit	3.46	19.80

USD forward rate against BDT

	Buy	Sell
1 M	68.20	69.21
2 M	68.32	69.43
3 M	68.47	69.65
6 M	68.92	70.38

Local Market FX: Local inter-bank FX market was active on Thursday as the banks prepared to close for the weekend. The demand for USD remained stable, and the volume of cross currency transactions remained steady. The USD remained almost unchanged against the Bangladeshi taka.

SHIPPING

Chittagong Port

Berthing position and performance of vessels as on 29/3/2007

Berth no.	Name of vessels	Cargo	L. Port call	Local agent	Dt of arrival	Leaving	Import disch
J/3+2	Brave Royal	C. Clink	Kant	BRSL	23/3	31/3	2062
J/4	Theodor	Slag	Viza	Move	19/3	30/3	3390
J/6	Ping Jiang (Liner)	GI	S. Hai	Cosco	24/3	1/4	1510
J/7	Cape Spencer	Cont	Ptp	PSSL	28/3	2/4	--
J/8	Cape Henry	Cont	Sing	APL	24/3	30/3	84
J/10	Banglar Shikha	Cont	P. Kel	BSC	24/3	29/3	--
J/11	Csav California	Cont	Col	PSSL	26/3	1/4	299
J/12	Oel Freedom	Cont	Col	PSSL	24/3	30/3	--
J/13	Kota Raja	Cont	Sing	Pil(Bd)	24/3	31/3	180
CCT/1	Cao Cheng	Cont	P. Kel	PML	24/3	--	--
CCT/2	Esham	Cont	Sing	CEL	25/3	31/3	--

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L. Port call	Local agent	Type of cargo	Loading ports
Liberty Spirit	29/3	Kala	Lams	Wheat(G)	--
Gem Of Goa	29/3	Brit	PSL	Phos. Acid	CUFLJ
Precious	30/3	Damm	Litmond	Urea(Bcic)	--
Qc Wisdom	30/3	Sing	QCSL	Cont	Sing
Xpress Manaslu	3003	Col	Seacon	Cont	Col
Banga Borat	30/3	Sin	Bdship	Cont	Sing
Banga Borti	31/3	P.Kel	Baridhi	Cont	P. Kel
Eid-A-Mostafa	31/3	Yang	Cla	GI(Log)	--
Histria Sun	31/3	Viet	Rsship	Scraping	--
F.Jahan	31/3	Zhou	BRSL	C. Clink	--
Eagle Progress	31/3	P.Kel	Everbest	Cont	Sing
Sea Master One	1/4	Sing	PML	Cont	Sing
Eagle Pride	1/4	Pkl	CT	Cont	Sing
Phoenix	1/4	Sin	PSSL	Cont	Cbo

Tanker due

Vernal Grace	29/3	Belw	Rainbow	CPO(RM/3)	
Al Badiyah	31/3	Kuwa	MSTPL	HSD/MS	
Anawan	30/3	C. Town	USLCdso(Rm/8/3)		15000 W/Lt
Borak	30/3	Hald	FSA	Bitumen	RM/3
Al Sabiyah	2/4	Kuwa	MSTPL	HSD	
Cherry-Ii	2/4	Rast	Uniglobal	Crude Oil	

Vessels at Kutubdia

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last Port call	Local agent	Date of arrival

Outside Port Limit

Sea Drill-6 (Rig)	Pro. Equip	--	IBSA	8/1
Gulf Dril-9 (Barge)	Pr. Equip	--	IBSA	3/1
Wira Keris	--	--	IBSA	R/A(19/3)
Pacific Steel	P. Equip	--	IBSA	R/A(28/3)

Vessels at outer anchorage

Vessels ready

Rhoneborg	Cont	Sing	QCSL	25/3
Hun Jiang	GI	Ghan	Cosco	27/3
Sinar Nusa	Cont	Sing	Jardine	28/3
Kota Rakayat	Cont	Sing	Pil(Bd)	26/3

Vessels not ready

Shwe Thara Phu	GI(Y. Ma)	Yang	TCL	28/3

Vessels awaiting employment / instruction

B. Sea	Ballast	Kaki	B. Enterprise	16/3
Santa Suria-Ii	--	--	Seacom	R/A(18/3)
Banglar Jyoti	--	--	BSC	R/A(23/3)
Pac Palawan	Cont	--	CEL	R/A(21/3)

The above are the shipping position and performance of vessels at Chittagong Port as per berthing sheet of CPA supplied by **Family,** Dhaka.

STOCK